

UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT
DISTRICT OF NEW JERSEY

CYNTHIA CHESTNUT-MATTHEWS,

Plaintiff,

v.

CAMDEN COUNTY JAIL,

Defendant.

HONORABLE JEROME B. SIMANDLE

Civil Action

No. 16-cv-06643 (JBS-AMD)

OPINION

APPEARANCES:

Cynthia Chestnut-Matthews, Plaintiff Pro Se
1006 Division Street
Camden, NJ 08104

SIMANDLE, Chief District Judge:

1. Plaintiff Cynthia Chestnut-Matthews seeks to bring a civil rights complaint pursuant to 42 U.S.C. § 1983 against the Camden County Jail ("CCJ"). Complaint, Docket Entry 1.

2. Section 1915(e)(2) requires a court to review complaints prior to service in cases in which a plaintiff is proceeding *in forma pauperis*. The Court must sua sponte dismiss any claim that is frivolous, is malicious, fails to state a claim upon which relief may be granted, or seeks monetary relief from a defendant who is immune from such relief. This action is subject to sua sponte screening for dismissal under 28 U.S.C. § 1915(e)(2)(B) because Plaintiff is proceeding *in forma pauperis*.

3. For the reasons set forth below, the Court will dismiss the complaint without prejudice for failure to state a claim. 28 U.S.C. § 1915(e)(2)(b)(ii).

4. To survive sua sponte screening for failure to state a claim, the complaint must allege "sufficient factual matter" to show that the claim is facially plausible. *Fowler v. UPMS Shadyside*, 578 F.3d 203, 210 (3d Cir. 2009) (citation omitted). "A claim has facial plausibility when the plaintiff pleads factual content that allows the court to draw the reasonable inference that the defendant is liable for the misconduct alleged." *Fair Wind Sailing, Inc. v. Dempster*, 764 F.3d 303, 308 n.3 (3d Cir. 2014). "[A] pleading that offers 'labels or conclusions' or 'a formulaic recitation of the elements of a cause of action will not do.'" *Ashcroft v. Iqbal*, 556 U.S. 662, 678 (2009) (quoting *Bell Atlantic Corp. v. Twombly*, 550 U.S. 544, 555 (2007)).

5. Plaintiff seeks monetary damages from CCJ for allegedly unconstitutional conditions of confinement. As the CCJ is not a "state actor" within the meaning of § 1983, the claims against it must be dismissed with prejudice. *See, e.g., Grabow v. Southern State Corr. Facility*, 726 F. Supp. 537, 538-39 (D.N.J. 1989) (correctional facility is not a "person" under § 1983).

6. Plaintiff may be able to amend the complaint to name state actors who were personally involved in the alleged unconstitutional conditions of confinement, however. To that end, the Court shall grant Plaintiff leave to amend the complaint within 30 days of the date of this order.

7. Plaintiff is advised that the amended complaint must plead sufficient facts to support a reasonable inference that a constitutional violation has occurred in order to survive this Court's review under § 1915. The fact section of the complaint states: "The jail was over crowded and I was made to sleep on floor with just a single matt. I had back surgery and it was very harmful to my health. I told the guards and nurses about my health but was still made to sleep in harmful atmosphere." Complaint § III. Plaintiff also alleges that she "did not receive the proper medication for my problem." *Id.* § IV. Even accepting these statements as true for screening purposes only, there is not enough factual support for the Court to infer a constitutional violation has occurred.

8. The mere fact that an individual is lodged temporarily in a cell with more persons than its intended design does not rise to the level of a constitutional violation. *See Rhodes v. Chapman*, 452 U.S. 337, 348-50 (1981) (holding double-celling by itself did not violate Eighth Amendment); *Carson v. Mulvihill*, 488 F. App'x 554, 560 (3d Cir. 2012) ("[M]ere double-bunking

does not constitute punishment, because there is no 'one man, one cell principle lurking in the Due Process Clause of the Fifth Amendment.'" (quoting *Bell v. Wolfish*, 441 U.S. 520, 542 (1979))). More is needed to demonstrate that such crowded conditions, for a pretrial detainee, shocks the conscience and thus violates due process rights. See *Hubbard v. Taylor*, 538 F.3d 229, 233 (3d Cir. 2008) (noting due process analysis requires courts to consider whether the totality of the conditions "cause[s] inmates to endure such genuine privations and hardship over an extended period of time, that the adverse conditions become excessive in relation to the purposes assigned to them."). Some relevant factors are the dates and length of the confinement(s), whether Plaintiff was a pretrial detainee or convicted prisoner, etc.

9. In addition, to the extent that Plaintiff seeks to allege a claim based on a violation of her right to adequate medical care, there are not enough facts to support an inference that Plaintiff's rights were violated in this regard. In order to set forth a cognizable claim for a violation of her right to adequate medical care, an inmate must allege: (1) a serious medical need; and (2) behavior on the part of prison officials that constitutes deliberate indifference to that need. See *Estelle v. Gamble*, 429 U.S. 97, 106 (1976); *Natale v. Camden Cnty. Corr. Facility*, 318 F.3d 575, 582 (3d Cir. 2003). The mere

assertion that Plaintiff did not receive the proper medication is insufficient to meet the pleading standard in the absence of additional facts. If she wishes to pursue this claim, Plaintiff should provide additional facts supporting both of the requirements in her amended complaint.

10. As Plaintiff may be able to amend her complaint to address the deficiencies noted by the Court, the Court shall grant Plaintiff leave to amend the complaint within 30 days of the date of this order.¹

11. Plaintiff should note that when an amended complaint is filed, the original complaint no longer performs any function in the case and cannot be utilized to cure defects in the amended complaint, unless the relevant portion is specifically incorporated in the new complaint. 6 Wright, Miller & Kane, Federal Practice and Procedure 1476 (2d ed. 1990) (footnotes omitted). An amended complaint may adopt some or all of the allegations in the original complaint, but the identification of the particular allegations to be adopted must be clear and explicit. *Id.* To avoid confusion, the safer course is to file an amended complaint that is complete in itself. *Id.*

12. For the reasons stated above, the complaint is dismissed without prejudice for failure to state a claim. The

¹ The amended complaint shall be subject to screening prior to service.

Court will reopen the matter in the event Plaintiff files an amended complaint within the time allotted by the Court.

13. An appropriate order follows.

February 1, 2017

Date

s/ Jerome B. Simandle

JEROME B. SIMANDLE

Chief U.S. District Judge